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ABSTRACT

This teaching unit, "Reconstruction Unit," which deals with the post-Civil War period, is the fifth of a series of 10 units about Alabama state history, part of a project designed to help teachers integrate the use of primary source materials into their classrooms. Although the units are designed to augment the study of Alabama, they are useful in the study of U.S. history, world history, and the social studies in general. Each unit contains background information for the teacher and consists of several lessons. Lessons contain learning objectives, suggested activities, and documents. This unit is divided into four sections: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "Lesson 1: Freedmen's Bureau: Labor Contract or Re-enslavement?" (one primary source document); (3) Lesson 2: Constitutional Convention 1875: Photographs as Historical Documents" (Photograph List of Names; three photograph source documents); and (4) "Lesson 3: Alabama Railroads: Maps as Historical Documents" (General Guidelines for Analyzing a Map; one primary source document). (BT)

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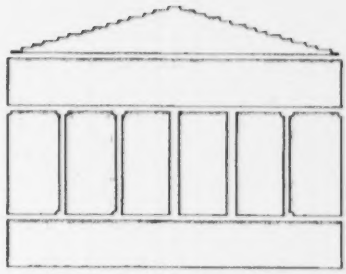

ADAH
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
ARCHIVES & HISTORY

Using Primary Sources in the Classroom

Reconstruction Unit

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http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/reconst.html

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Project Description

This project is designed to help teachers more easily integrate the use of primary source materials into their classrooms. It consists of teaching units on Alabama history organized in ten chronological/subject areas:

- Creek War, 1813-1814
- Settlement
- Slavery
- Civil War
- Reconstruction
- 1901 Constitution
- World War I
- Depression/New Deal
- World War II
- Civil Rights Movement

While these units cover some of the most critical and significant periods in Alabama history, the selected lessons are meant to be representative rather than comprehensive. These units were designed to augment the study of Alabama, yet they are useful in the study of the United States, the world, and the social studies in general. The documents can also be used to supplement the study of other curriculums.

Each unit contains background information for the teacher and is made up of several lessons. The lessons contain learning objectives, suggested activities, and documents. Documents are reproduced in the original form and transcribed when necessary. Primary source materials may be printed and reproduced for classroom use. Lessons can be used without modification, adapted for specific class use, or entire new lessons and activities may be created based on the primary source materials provided.

Purpose of the Project

The 1992 Alabama Social Studies Course of Studies emphasized the use of primary source documents to "enrich the social studies program and enable students to visualize and empathize with people of other times and places." These documents help students vividly understand the feelings and actions of Jeremiah Austill at the Canoe Fight of 1813, of riders on the first integrated buses in Montgomery at the conclusion of the famous bus boycott, of women nursing wounded Civil War soldiers, and of destitute Alabama families during the Depression. These documents enrich the study of Alabama history and the study of all civilizations.

The Alabama Department of Archives and History is the official repository for Alabama government documents and holds many of the most important books, documents, visual materials and artifacts that document the history of Alabama and the South. The purpose of this project is to bring those materials to students, and to organize them in such a way that teachers can easily utilize them in the classroom.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Lesson 1: "Freedmen's Bureau: Labor Contract or Re-enslavement?" 2

Document 1: Tait Labor Contract. 5

Lesson 2: Constitutional Convention 1875: Photographs as Historical Documents 9

Photograph List of Names 11

Photograph 1: "Reconstruction Legislature, 1872" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 5 . . . . . 12.

Photograph 2: "Alabama Senate, 1872-73" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 5 13

Photograph 3: "Constitutional Convention, 1875" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 4 14

Lesson 3: Alabama Railroads: Maps as Historic Documents 15

General Guidelines for Analyzing a Map 17

Document 1: HARPER'S Weekly, January 13, 1866 18

Document 2: 1910 Rand McNally Handy Railroad Map 19

Document 3: 1883 Map of Alabama, The Eclectic Complete Geography 20

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Using Primary Sources in the Classroom:

Reconstruction Unit

Introduction to Reconstruction Unit

Alabama was desolate after four years of Civil War. The social and economic fabric of the state was torn as its citizens looked about them at the material devastation while mourning the loss of as many as 70,000 men killed or disabled. Industry and agriculture were destitute, having suffered invading Union troops and foraging armies on both sides during the conflict, particularly in the northern counties. While the state's Black Belt largely was untouched by the fighting until the very end of the war, its once-rich cotton economy was in shambles as the black slaves upon which its wealth depended were freed with the war's end.

Economic recovery was complicated by social tensions between those who had supported secession and those who had not, and between white Alabamians and newly emancipated African Americans. Intrigues in Montgomery and in Washington further retarded economic recovery and reconciliation as state and national politicians vied over the power to direct the process of Reconstruction. Ultimately, three constitutions were written for Alabama during Reconstruction: the first attempted virtually to reestablish the pre-war status quo (1865 - http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/constitutions/1865/1865.html), the second to broaden political power to include black freedmen (1868 - http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/constitutions/1868/1868.html), and the third to restore control to conservative Democrats (1875 - http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/constitutions/1875/1875.html). Violence and election fraud accompanied the process at every turn.

Lesson 1: Freedmen's Bureau: Labor Contract or Re-enslavement?

---

1. Background Information for Teachers:

On March 3, 1865, the United States Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. This federal agency helped ex-slaves with food, medical aid, education, and legal advice. General Wager Swayne was appointed assistant commissioner in Alabama and, after 1866, district military commander over the federal troops who occupied the state. Under his direction, the Freedmen's Bureau distributed rations to thousands of blacks and whites in the "starving time" of 1865-66.

Thousands of African Americans who had left the plantations for the cities when freedom came soon found themselves homeless and hungry. Early in 1866, the freedmen began to return to the land for spring planting. At first they worked for the promise of wages at rates agreed upon at the start of the year. The Freedmen's Bureau required labor contracts to be entered into by blacks and their employers, but did not set wage levels. In a near-cashless society, money wages were soon discontinued, to be replaced by sharecropping arrangements. The standard contract gave the black laborer a share of the crop according to how much of the expenses of production he paid. Only for a brief period did the Freedmen's Bureau offer some economic shelter for the ex-slaves. The sharecropping system that evolved during Reconstruction soon bound most African Americans into debt so ruinous that they were practically re-enslaved. (William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Atkins, Wayne Flynt, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*, 234-39.)

The first labor contract selected for this activity is especially significant because it was written before General Swayne implemented his labor policy in Alabama. Later ones are included for comparison.

---

2. Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this activity, students should be able to:

1. Define Freedmen's Bureau.
2. Define labor contract.
3. Explain sharecropping.
4. Analyze economic conditions in Alabama after the Civil War.

5. Draw conclusions about the problems inherent in sharecropping.

---

3. Suggested lesson:

1. Review with your students economic/social conditions in Alabama (and the south) after the Civil War.

2. Make copies of James G. Tait Labor Contract and ask students to answer the following:

   a. What type of document is this?
   b. Who wrote it?
   c. What is the tone of the docume ? (businesslike? friendly? legalistic?)
   d. What kind of information does it contain?
   e. Who signed the document?
   f. What is significant about the date of the document?
   g. What is significant about the signatures of the employees?
   h. How will it be enforced?
   i. Are both employer and employees equally protected? Why or why not?
   j. How do you think life would be different for the freedmen from their former lives as slaves?

3. Ask students to write an article for the local newspaper on the subject of labor contracts from the point of view of General Wager Swayne, James G. Tait, or one of the former slaves.

4. Other: Use the additional documents to explain problems of enforcing labor contracts. Explain how the 1868 contract between Tait and Thomas hill differs from earlier one. (This is not truly a labor contract under Freedmen's Bureau policy.)

Document: Tait labor contract – attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/active1.html

The Tait family occupied a prominent place in Alabama politics and agriculture in the 1817-1880 period. James Tait (1791-1855) came to Wilcox County from Georgia during the great land rush which followed the Creek War, bringing twenty slaves, ten of them field hands. During his first few seasons, his hands planted only 175 acres of cotton and 80 acres of corn a year. He was soon followed by his father, Charles Tait, (1768-1835) a former U.S. Senator from Georgia, who became the first U. S. Judge for the Alabama district, 1820-1826.

As Tait prospered, he bought more slaves and land. From his father, he inherited 100 slaves and two nearby plantations. In 1851, Tait owned 311 slaves. His six plantations produced 465 bales of cotton, and 15,000 bushels of corn, and 340 hogs for slaughter.

Tait's vast holdings lay on both sides of the Alabama River. Steamboats called regularly at his landings for cotton and corn and to take members of the Tait family to Mobile or Montgomery. Tait served as a trustee of the University of Alabama, a stockholder in Wilcox Academy, and a member of the American Colonization Society which advocated that free blacks and slaves, purchased from their owners, be resettled in Africa. James A. Tait and his wife had eight children, one of which was James G. Tait (1833-1911). James G. attended Harvard University and returned to the Wilcox County plantation and life as a planter.

Looking back with satisfaction on nearly 35 years as an Alabama planter, Tait wrote in his farm book in 1853:

"Since I came into possession of my Father's estate, my progress has been steadily onward but not rapid, for I have always worked by the rule, 'take care and hold on'." (Hamilton, 162)

James G. Tait (1833-1911) landowner in this Labor Contract dated July 31, 1865, just three months after the Surrender (end of the Civil War), evidently adhered to this rule too as this labor contract insured that his crops would be harvested.

State of Ala
Wilcox County

This Contract made This the
day of 1868 between James
H. Tait & Thomas O'Neil (Freedman) witnesseth
That the said Tait agrees to let Dow Neill have & cultivate
piece of land known as the "Morris Ridge" for the year 1868.
Upon which (Neill) he is permitted to clear land & build
houses, without interest to said Tait excepting rails & flooring
The said Tait agrees to let him work this land east
of the residence known as "Dry Fork" & to give said Tait for
rent thereof one fourth of all produce raised on said lands.
The aforesaid Tait is to be at no expense in feeding
his (Neills) family or any person employed in working said
Crop —
Witness
R. G. Barnes.

Document 1: Tait Labor Contract

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Document 1 Transcript (LPR 35, Box 1, folder 2)

Freedman's contract, 1865

Written across script :

"Approved Aug 9th 1865
By Order
Saml S. Gardner
Asst Supt Freedmen
by
Fergusen
Selma
Ala
Registered Sept 4, 1865"

State of Ala }
Wilcox Co }

a contract entered into, this the 31st day of July, between James G. Tait as employer and the following named Freedmen, or Laborers as employees of the County & State aforesaid. The said Freedmen or Laborers, on their part, for & in consideration of the terms hereinafter state, bind themselves, to:--faithfully & diligently labor for said Jas G. Tait, during the rema--inder of the year 1865, (according to the (torn) regulation, conditions & penalties prescribed & contained in a (torn) rules & regulations for the State of Ala. & c.--) and said labor is to (torn) formed under the direction of the said J.G. Tait, or any agent by him appointed.

The said Freedmen, or Laborers bind themselves to visit, or receive visitors on such conditions as may be agreed upon, by said J.G. Tait or his agent. The Freedmen, or Laborers further bind themselves to account to the said J.G. Tait, for the value of any property of whatever kind or description that may be wasted, lost, or destroyed by reason of the negligence, or careless conduct of said Freedmen or laborers, & the part of the crop allotted to said Freedmen or Laborers, is hereby made liable for the value of any property, so wasted, lost or destroyed. It is further agreed & stipulated, that if any of the said Freedmen or Laborers shall refuse, or fail to work faithfully & diligently, the said James G. Tait

or his agent shall have power & is hereby authorised to discharge him or them. The said Jas G. Tait binds himself to pay over & deliver on the premises to said Freedmen or laborers one-eighth part of the present growing crop ^of corn, fodder, cowpeas & ground peas, and also one half of the potatoes & sorghum syrup of sickness & rice, & also to furnish food, clothing, houses, fuel, & medicines--& in bad cases a physician

James G. Tait.

Witness
A. L. Whisenhart
W. P. Barnes
A.W. Bethea

Isham his X mark
Washington his X mark
Isaac his X mark
Brian his X mark
Glaster his X mark
John his X mark
Dempsy his X mark
Jeff his X mark
Jack his X mark
Bill Smart his X mark
Widow (torn) her X mark
Widow-Milly her X mark
Dick his X mark
Frank his X mark
Malinda her X mark
Jim his X mark

Transcript (LPR 35, Box 1, Folder 2)

State of Alabama} This contract made this the
Wilcox County } day of 1868 between James
A. Tait & Thomas Hill (Freedman) with respect(?)
That the said Tait agrees to let Thom Hill have a certain piece of land known as the "Morriss Ridge," for the year 1868 upon which (Ridge) he ^Hill is permitted to clear land & build houses, without expense to said Tait excepting nails & flooring
The said Tait agrees to let him work the lands east of his residence known as "Dry Fork," & to give said Tait for rent thereof one fourth of all produce raised on said lands. The aforesaid Tait is to be at no expense in feeding his (Hill's) family or any stock required in making said crop-

Witness

Transcript (Background: William Bonnell Hall was a doctor and cotton planter in Lowndes County, Alabama.)

Lowndesboro, March 12th 1866

Dr. Wm Hall

Sir

The "Freedmen," Frank Pfeaster, Abner, Ann & Cicily have called my attention to the contract made between you & them last year and alledge that you have not completed with you part of said contract, having paid them nothing.

It is my duty, as agent of the Bureau, to call your attention to the fact, & ask of you, that you attend to the matter at once; or appear before me, and show cause why you have not done so.

Very Respectfully
Your Obt Serv't

A. W. Russell
J.P. & L.A.F.B.

Transcript

Swamp Plantation
Lowndes County, Ala
Jan'y 5th 1866

I, Cooper, do agree to hire the time of my wife Angeline and my two sons, Liberty and Mack, to Wm. B. Hall & Thos Douglass for the year of 1866 Term of service commencing Jan'y 5th 1866, and ending Dec. 31st 1866.

I further agree to see that they labor faith-fully, and yield obedience to their orders, for which service, I am to receive Two hundred and fifty dollars, $250.00 medical bills & rations.

Deductions to be made for all time lost from labor, and for support of my children.

his
Witness: Cooper X
Eli Cook mark

Lesson 2: Constitutional Convention, 1875: Photographs as Historical Documents

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1. Background Information for Teachers:

On November 24, 1874, George S. Houston [http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/g_housto.htmlwas inaugurated governor of Alabama, restoring Democratic, white, home government after a period of "Radical Republican"-controlled legislatures. The 1872-73 Alabama General Assembly had seen the Republicans control the 86-member House (44 Republicans, 21 of whom were black) with only one shy of a majority in the Senate (18 Republican, 5 of whom were black).

Among the "Redeemer" Democrats in control of the state government after the 1874 elections there was a growing sentiment for a new constitution or extensive amendments to the old Republican-authored one of 1868. Governor Houston appointed a committee to consider the question of a constitutional convention and then submitted the question to the state's voters who concurrently elected delegates. Eighty Democrats, 12 Republicans and 7 "Independents" were chosen as delegates, only 4 of whom were African Americans.

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2. Suggested Lesson:

1. Discussion - Compare and contrast the two photographs.

2. Research and writing - Show the students the printed information at the bottom of the photograph (attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/names.html. Ask them to select (or you can assign) one of the delegates to research. Give them guidelines such as:

    a. Where did the delegate live?
    b. What political party did he belong to?
    c. What was his occupation?
    d. Did he own land?
    e. What was his level of education?

Photographs:

Photograph 1: "Reconstruction Legislature, 1872" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 5, Alabama Department of Archives and History,

Montgomery, Alabama. Attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/c_1872.html

Photograph 2: "Alabama Senate, 1872-73" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 5, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. Attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/c1872_73.html

Photograph 3: "Constitutional Convention, 1875" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 4, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. Attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/c_1875.html

H. E. DIBBLE, PHOTOGRAPHER.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

Montgomery Alabama, September 30th 1875.

1st Line.— H. A. Carson, A. H. Curtis, S. F. Rice, W. M. Lowe, J. K. P. Flournoy, H. W. Laird, G. P. Harrison, J. T. Foster, T. Lomax, G. W. Delbridge, R. A. O'Neal, R. A. McClellan.
2nd Line.— G. S. W. Lewis, R. A. Long, S. Forwood, Gil. Parks, T. J. Burton, R. H. Moren, F. W. Sykes, J. D. Rather, O. Randon, S. C. Allgood, W. G. Little Jr. J. W. Inzer, L. Cardinal,
3rd Line.— J. F. Hollis, A. G. Horgrove, W. Jones, Jonathan Bibb, G. P. Walker, P. S. Lyon, H. A. Ward, E. J. Willett, W. Coleman, F. A. Nisbett, W. S. Mill, J. Aikin, B. F. Weatherford, W. J. Samford, T. H. Herndon, Pat Doran, Doorkeeper.
4th Line.— B. Johnson, Davis, J. D. Meadows, G. B. Taylor, J. A. Foster, R. H. Powell, E. C. Richards, C. C. Langdon, J. E. Brown, J. H. White, J. D. Murphree, D. Norvell, E. A. Powell,
W. A. Musgrove, J. F. Burns, M. P. Akers, A. W. Plowman, A. J. Ingle, M. L. Woods, Engrossing Clerk.

16

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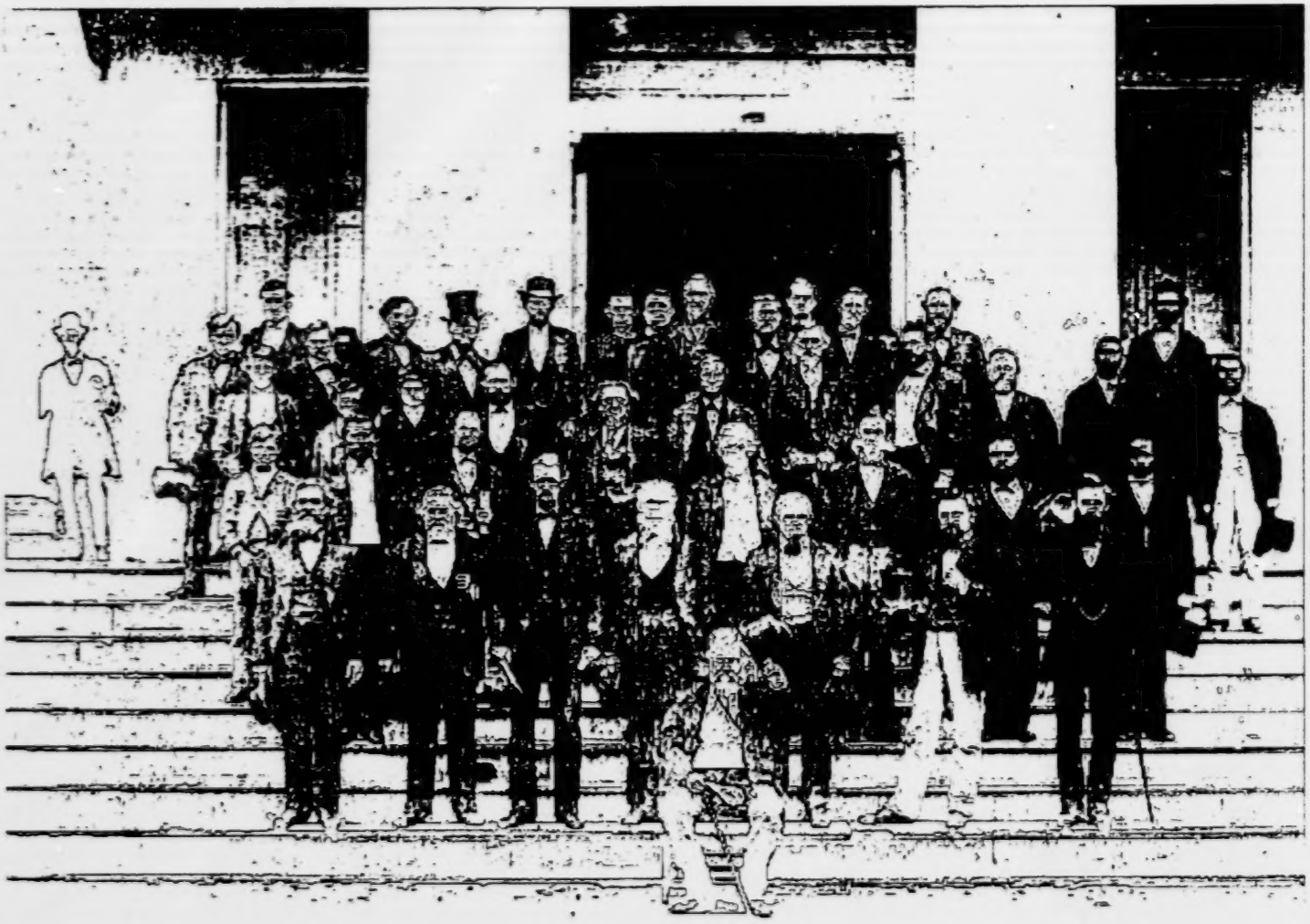
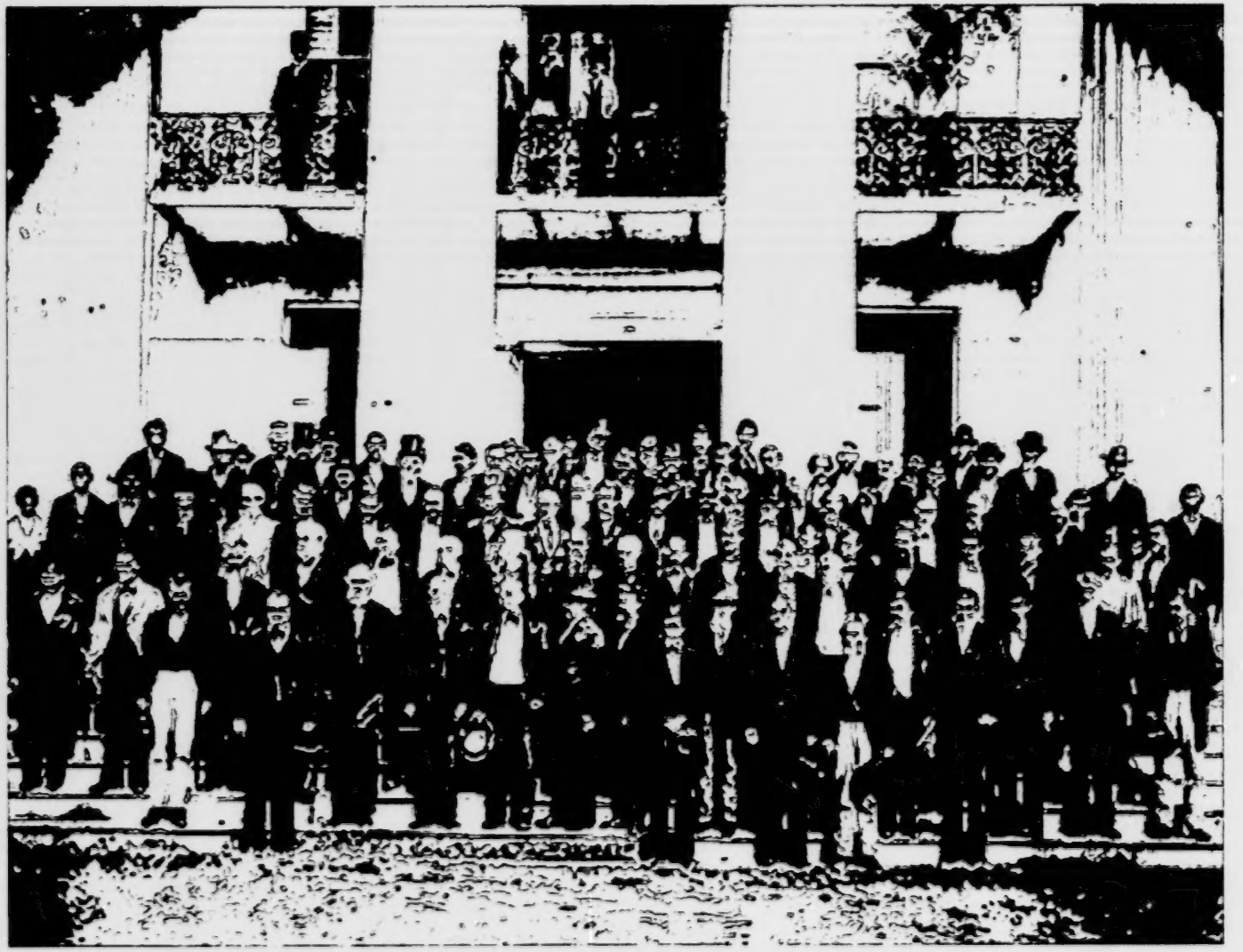
Photograph 1: "Reconstruction Legislature, 1872" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 5, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.



Photograph 2: "Alabama Senate, 1872-73" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 5, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.



Photograph 3: "Constitutional Convention, 1875" Photographs-Subject Vertical files, Legislative bodies, Box 4, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

Lesson 3: Alabama Railroads: Maps as Historic Documents

1. Background Information for Teachers:

At the end of the Civil War, the transportation network of Alabama was bankrupt. In 1860, there had been fewer than 800 miles of railroads in the state. The war had taken a heavy toll from the existing lines, and during the war little or no additions were made. Lack of adequate transportation during the war made it difficult to ferry men and supplies where they needed.

The need to increase railroad milage was evident after the war if Alabama was to recover economically. Railroad expansion became a contoversial issue during Reconstruction, fueled as it was by state-guaranteed bonds to oft-times unscrupulous entrepreneurs less interested in laying new track than in manufacturing wealth for themselves. The state ran up obligations on defaulted bond payments of some $30 million by 1875 (which the legislatve committee set up to deal with the crisis negotiated to less than $13 million), with relatively little additional milage resulting.

By 1880, Alabama only had about 1,800 miles of completed track. The railroad building boom did come, but in later decades. Some 1,400 miles were built in the 1880s alone, with about 2,000 additional miles added between 1890 and 1910.

2. Learning Objectives:

The 1866 map selected for this activity, published less than a year after the surrender, shows railroads lines, but leaves many questions unanswered. Compare the 1866 map with the 1910 map.

(Upon completion of this activity, students should be able to:

1. Identify components of a map.
2. Identify changes from the 1866 map to 1910 map.
3. Draw conclusions by observations.

3. Suggested Lesson:

1. Make a transparency of the maps for use on an overhead projector or make a classroom set.

2. Ask students to identify the type of maps.

3. Ask students to identify the physical qualities of the maps, i.e., title, date, scale, etc.

4. When were the maps made?

5. Where were the maps produced?

6. What does the picture at top of the 1866 map tell about Alabama?

7. List three things in the 1866 map that you think are important?

8. Why do you think these maps were drawn?

9. What evidence in the maps suggests why they were drawn?

10. What information does the 1866 map add to the textbook's account of Alabama at this time?

11. Write a question to the mapmaker that is left unanswered by these maps.

12. Compare the 1866 map with the 1910 map to see what changes occurred, i.e., number of counties, highways, railroads, cities.

Documents:

Document 1: HARPER'S Weekly, January 13, 1866 Attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/harper.html

Document 2: 1910 Rand McNally Handy Railroad Map Attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/map.html

Document 3: 1883 Map of Alabama, The Eclectic Complete Geography Attached and at http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/atlas.html

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ANALYZING A MAP

1. Study the map for two (2) minutes.

2. For what purpose is this map intended? Is it topographic contour-line map? A military map? Political map? Natural resource map?

3. What are the physical qualities of the map? Is it handwritten? Does it have notations? A legend (key)? A title? A scale?

4. What is the date of map?

5. Where was the map produced?

6. Who created the map?

7. List three things in this map that you think are important.

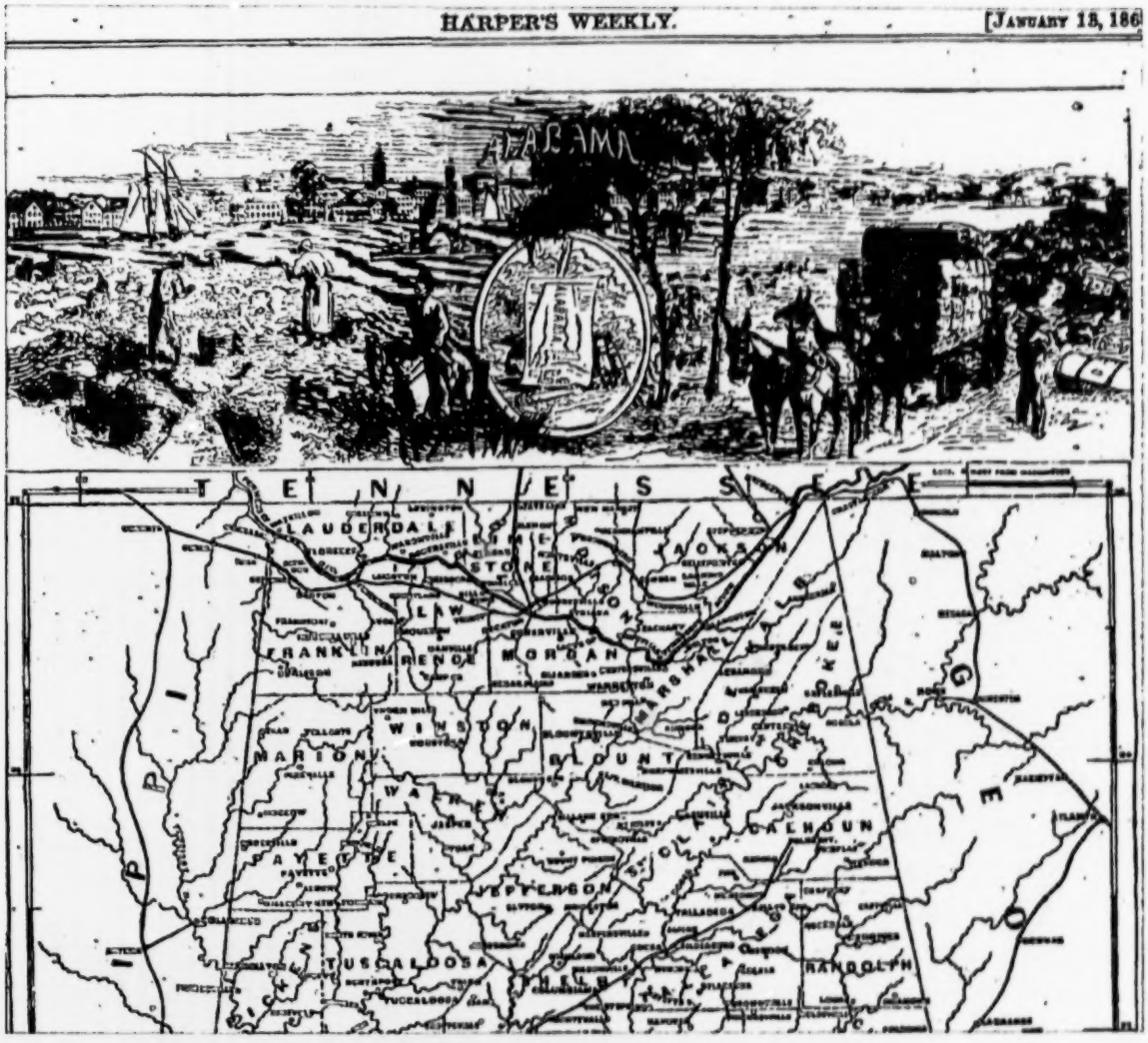
8. Why do you think the map was drawn?

9. What evidence in the map suggests why it was drawn?

10. What information does the map add to the textbook's account of this event?

11. Does the information in this map support or contradict information that you have read about this event? Explain.

12. Write a question to the mapmaker that is left unanswered by this map.



Document 1: HARPER'S Weekly, January 13, 1866

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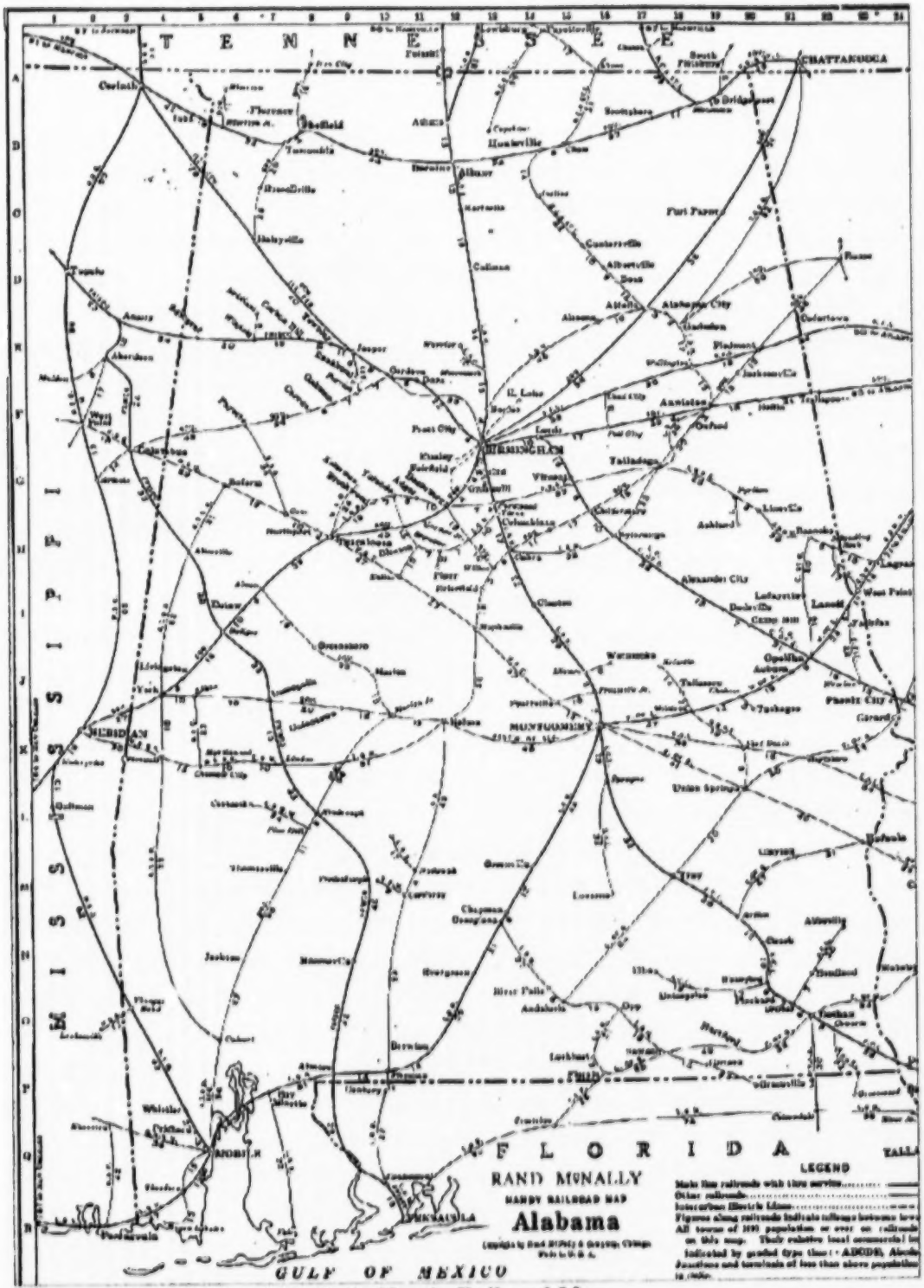

Document 2: 1910 Rand McNally Handy Railroad Map

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Document 3: 1883 Map of Alabama, The Eclectic Complete Geography

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